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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet discusses some of the information needs of rural schools, offers ideas on how to educate rural librarians and other rural educators about ERIC, illustrates how to successfully use the system, enumerates the kind of materials and equipment needed, stresses cooperation among rural educators, lists addresses and telephone numbers where further information on ERIC can be obtained and, finally, lists addresses from whence to order ERIC products. The information in this pamphlet was obtained almost wholly from librarians, library media specialists, area education agencies, and state departments of education who are now using ERIC in rural schools. (Author)

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How ERIC Can Help Librarians in Rural Areas Meet the Information Needs of Teachers, Administrators, and Students

by

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HOW ERIC CAN HELP LIBRARIANS IN RURAL AREAS MEET THE INFORMATION NEEDS OF TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS, AND STUDENTS

"In Wyoming...schools can be 100 miles apart and as much as 10 or 20 years behind in education technology and theories."(1) Librarians "who have chosen to pursue their profession in rural areas have done so being well aware of their isolation from urban areas and their educational advantages."(2) Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), a nationwide information system, can be the means for reaching these rural schools and their librarians and can help to bring them up to date on current educational information.

ERIC, sponsored and supported by the National Institute of Education (NIE), has a central office in Washington, D.C. that coordinates 16 clearinghouses across the country. Focusing on specific fields of education, each clearinghouse

acquires, evaluates, catalogs, indexes, and abstracts pertinent documents and journal articles. The documents are announced in RESOURCES IN EDUCATION (RIE) and the articles in CURRENT INDEX TO JOURNALS IN EDUCATION (CIJE). Both of these indexes provide access to documents and articles that might otherwise not be readily available.

This pamphlet discusses some of the information needs of rural schools, offers ideas on how to educate rural librarians and other rural educators about ERIC, illustrates how to successfully use the system, enumerates the kinds of materials and equipment needed, stresses cooperation among rural educators, lists addresses and telephone numbers where further information on ERIC can be obtained and, finally, lists addresses from whence to order ERIC products. The information in this pamphlet was obtained almost wholly from librarians, library media specialists,

area education agencies, and state departments of education who are now using ERIC in rural schools.

WHAT ARE THE INFORMATION NEEDS OF RURAL LIBRARIANS?

The needs of rural librarians are similar to the needs of librarians in urban areas.(3) Rural librarians must provide information for teachers, administrators and students. For teachers, rural librarians need curriculum information to aid in planning, developing, and updating curricula to meet current student needs. Rural teachers need specific programs and materials which can be used in class, such as shop curriculum materials, information about improving reading and writing skills, and materials addressing other instructional problems. Librarians must make available to teachers up-to-date information on classroom teaching methods to help them improve their teaching and control their classroom. Teachers need to keep up with developments in

their fields by having access to inservice and professional materials, especially those that relate to their coursework needs. Both teachers and administrators need the latest textbook evaluations in order to select appropriate materials for their students. Rural librarians must also be able to provide materials for administrators to research various problems concerning construction of new buildings, hiring new personnel, and planning district-wide curriculum. In addition, administrators need answers to specific questions when making decisions on developing pilot projects: What kinds of problems can they anticipate? What personnel will they need? How much will the project cost? Finally, rural librarians need information to help prepare students headed for college, as well as general information to aid students in their research and coursework. All of these needs can be satisfied by ERIC.

HOW ARE RURAL LIBRARIANS, TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS, AND STUDENTS MADE AWARE OF ERIC?

One good way to initiate the "ERIC awareness" process is through workshops held at state library meetings or at local school district meetings. Some state departments of education, notably Arizona, hold workshops for librarians and school library media specialists. Arizona's workshops provide a general overview of ERIC: what it is about, how it works, where ERIC collections are located, and how to contact the 16 ERIC clearinghouses. In many states workshops are also held for teachers as part of their inservice training and for students in order to broaden their research ability. Because of their role as decision makers and because of the need for their support in making use of ERIC, administrators should also attend ERIC workshops. Workshops are conducted by ERIC staff, state education department staff, or librarians trained in the use of ERIC.

In addition to workshops, ERIC exhibits at state meetings and in school libraries are often effective awareness tools. These exhibits may include posters, printed hand-outs, and slide and video tape programs.

Newsletters can also be important in disseminating information on ERIC. ERIC clearinghouses publish newsletters which schools or school districts can receive simply by placing their name on the clearinghouse's mailing list (clearinghouse addresses listed at the end of this pamphlet). Many states also use newsletters to publish information on ERIC. Some state education departments include information on ERIC in the brochures or pamphlets that are disseminated to educators within their state. For example, Oklahoma's Project SEEK (Sooner Exchange for Educational Knowledge), a part of the state education department, publishes information packets related to areas of general interest to educators. These packets, which are publicized in

newsletters, at educational meetings, and through other appropriate media, include bibliographies of related materials available from ERIC.

Finally, personal contacts can be the "best way to get people using any source of information."(4) Word-of-mouth is especially effective from a teacher who has successfully retrieved information from ERIC. Students can be directed to ERIC by informed library staff when their enquiries concerning term paper topics and other reports are likely to be covered by ERIC materials.

HOW DO RURAL LIBRARIANS USE ERIC?

Once the "ERIC awareness" process is under way, librarians can begin to use ERIC to the fullest. Rural librarians can make use of ERIC materials not only to answer specific research questions but also to fill gaps in their libraries in various subject areas. ERIC can supply information relating to many different problems

and questions. These include curriculum planning, developing and updating; special program development and evaluation; updates on research being done in problem areas in education, such as violence and drug abuse (5); new and improved methods of instruction; enhancement of bibliographies for research papers and reports; and administrative proposals. As Jill Leiker, an English teacher in Rifle, Colorado says, "ERIC brings the education world to your front door."(6)

But what if the "front door" is miles away? Many rural areas are isolated and experience difficult travel conditions that prevent easy access to ERIC materials. Location of ERIC materials can be a problem affecting their use. Those schools and/or districts who have a teacher center might place their ERIC collection in this center for greater accessibility by teachers. If a state or university library, housing an ERIC collection, is nearby, this can also enhance the use made of ERIC.

Another important factor which can prove to be a problem in using ERIC is time. Some teachers and librarians just do not have the time during the working day to stop and research ERIC materials. A planning period before the students have arrived for the day or after they have left can create valuable time for fuller use of ERIC. Because of these considerations, ERIC needs full administrative support for maximum utilization.(7)

Networking is another solution to the problems of location, time, geographic isolation, and travel conditions in rural areas. A number of states have overcome these problems by establishing information networks which make extensive use of the ERIC data base. Three successful networks are in Arizona, Oklahoma, and Iowa. In Arizona, through Project AIDE (Arizona Information Dissemination for Educators), schools select a representative (usually the school librarian) to become a linker/facilitator. This person attends an ERIC workshop in the fall at the

state department of education conducted by staff members of the Educational Information Center (EIC). The linker/facilitator then becomes the contact person for his/her school, presenting ERIC information to the faculty and requesting ERIC searches from the EIC. The EIC can be reached by telephone, by mail, or in person, and provides free microfiche copies of ERIC documents upon request.

Project SEEK, an Oklahoma dissemination project funded by NIE, is another excellent example of how rural librarians can use ERIC via a state information network. ERIC is Project SEEK's main resource. Free of charge, SEEK will provide Oklahoma educators in public schools with ERIC computer searches and microfiche copies of documents.

Iowa has also established an information network for librarians and library media specialists. To obtain materials for a research question, a librarian submits the question to the

INFORMS (Iowa Network for Obtaining Resource Materials) field representative located at the Area Education Agency serving his/her area. The field representative checks CIJE at the agency and orders pertinent journal articles and/or forwards the question to the INFORMS central office. At the central office, ERIC and other data bases are searched and an information packet answering the question is prepared. The packet may include RIE abstracts, copies of ERIC documents on microfiche, journal citations from CIJE and other indexes, bibliographies of related materials, and names and addresses of resource people.

Specific ERIC materials made available by these various state education departments include not only the RIE and CIJE indexes and computer searches of the ERIC database, but also Information Analysis Products (IAPs--analyses and syntheses of hot topics, published by the ERIC clearinghouses) and clearinghouse newsletters.

WHAT KINDS OF EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS ARE NEEDED TO USE ERIC?

Initially, all that is needed to use ERIC are access to the post office and/or a telephone to order needed ERIC documents from a state education department collection or from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (see address at end of pamphlet) and subscriptions to the RIE and CIJE indexes. One centrally located set of these indexes can easily service an entire district.(8) However, as the use of and demand for ERIC increases, libraries and schools may wish to increase their holdings.

The Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors, which allows on-location searching of the RIE and CIJE indexes, should be the first additional subscription acquired for a collection. A microfiche reader, allowing efficient use of ERIC documents reproduced on microfiche might follow. A small, portable reader which can be taken home would be the most useful in a rural library where ERIC users often experience long and difficult

travel conditions to and from the school and cannot stay at the school to do their research. A fiche copier and even a paper copier would be useful to reproduce items from RIE and other sources. Some rural librarians have found the ERIC IAPs useful as a concise summation of current topics in education. The Best of ERIC publications also provide useful information in concise form. Back issues of RIE have proven useful for training student research classes in the use of ERIC. Slide/tape presentations produced by ERIC and the "How to Use ERIC" or "All About ERIC" booklets are also effective in helping both teachers and students to learn to use ERIC. While budget constraints and, in many cases in small rural schools, space limitations, might be seen as limits to a more complete ERIC collection, access to ERIC can offset budget cuts in the areas of curriculum, instructional, inservice, and other professional materials (specifically periodicals).(9)

HOW CAN COOPERATION ENHANCE ERIC USE IN RURAL AREAS?

Cooperation among librarians in rural schools, school districts, and even the state departments may be the key to full utilization of ERIC in rural areas, especially in light of present and predicted budget cuts. Workshops on ERIC often become more economically feasible when they are sponsored by several agencies. Also, sharing materials and transferring materials to appropriate users can ensure efficient use of ERIC. State department networks, as set up in Iowa, Arizona and Oklahoma, are excellent examples of how cooperation on all levels--state, district (or area), and local--can ensure access by all educators to ERIC.

WHERE CAN MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ERIC BE OBTAINED?

Many sources can supply rural librarians with information about ERIC. Most state departments of education house the ERIC collection of microfiche

and may also be able to direct librarians to a collection closer to home. State libraries also frequently have ERIC collections, as do university libraries. Area Education Agencies, such as those in Iowa, can either answer questions involving ERIC or relay the question to someone who can answer it. Of course, each ERIC clearinghouse maintains an ERIC collection and employs a staff eager to answer questions. Finally, librarians can always contact the central ERIC office at the NIE in Washington, D.C. for more information.

WHAT ARE SOME USEFUL ERIC ADDRESSES?

Central ERIC

National Institute of Education
Information Resources Division
Educational Resources Information Center
1200 19th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20208
(202)254-5500

EDRS

ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS)
P. O. Box 190
Arlington, VA 22210
(703)841-1212

ERIC Clearinghouses

ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career,
and Vocational Education (CE)
National Center for Research
in Vocational Education
Ohio State University
1960 Kenny Road
Columbus, OH 43210
(614)486-3655

ERIC Clearinghouse on Counseling
and Personnel Services (CG)
University of Michiga-
2108 School of Education
Ann Arbor, MI 48109
(313)764-9492

ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading
and Communications Skills (CG)
National Council of Teachers of English
1111 Kenyon Road
Urbana, IL 61801
(217)328-3870

ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management (EA)
University of Oregon
Library, Room 108
Eugene, OR 97403
(503)686-5043

ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped
and Gifted Children (EC)
Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091
(703)620-3660

ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics (FL)
Center for Applied Linguistics
3520 Prospect Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20007
(202)298-9292

ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education (HE)
George Washington University
One Dupont Circle, N.W., Suite 630
Washington, DC 20036
(202)296-2597

ERIC Clearinghouse on Information Resources (IR)
Syracuse University
School of Education
130 Huntington Hall
Syracuse, NY 13210
(315)423-3640

ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges (JC)
University of California
96 Powell Library Building
405 Hilgard Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90024
(213)825-3931

ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary
and Early Childhood Education (PS)
University of Illinois
College of Education
805 W. Pennsylvania Avenue
Urbana, IL 61801
(217)333-1386

ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education
and Small Schools (RC)
New Mexico State University
Box 3AP
Las Cruces, NM 88003
(505)646-2623

ERIC Clearinghouse for Science, Mathematics,
and Environmental Education (SE)
Ohio State University
1200 Chambers Road, Room 310
Columbus, OH 43212
(614)422-6717

ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/
Science Education (SO)
Social Science Education Consortium, Inc.
855 Broadway
Boulder, CO 80302
(303)492-8434

ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education (SP)
American Association of Colleges
for Teacher Education
One Dupont Circle, N.W., Suite 610
Washington, DC 20036
(202)293-2450

ERIC Clearinghouse on Tests, Measurement,
and Evaluation (TM)
Educational Testing Service
Rosedale Road
Princeton, NJ 08541
(609)734-5180

ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education (UD)
Teachers College, Columbia University
525 West 120th Street (Box 40)
New York, NY 10027
(212)678-3437/3

HOW ARE ERIC PRODUCTS ORDERED?

Resources in Education (RIE)
All About ERIC
(A detailed discussion of how to use ERIC.)

Superintendent of Documents
U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, DC 20402

Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE)
Thesaurus of ERIC Descriptors

The Oryx Press
2214 North Central at Encanto
Phoenix, AZ 85004

Other ERIC Products

ERIC Processing and Reference Facility
4833 Rugby Avenue, Suite 303
Bethesda, MD 20814

FOOTNOTES

(1) Henrietta Wexler, "All You Have to Do Is Ask," American Education Magazine June (1981): 23-27.

(2) Linda Goolsby October 9, 1981: personal communication

(3) Ibid.

(4) Claire Odenheim September 30, 1981: personal communication.

(5) Ibid.

(6) Wexler, "All You Have to Do Is Ask," p. 25.

(7) Goolsby.

(8) Ibid.

(9) Mary Jo Bruett October 5, 1981: personal communication.

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